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New families meant to be

By [Kelly Nankervis](#)

Little Marilena and Donavin, both 15 months old, probably didn't understand what all the fuss was about Tuesday.

They might have thought the light-up pens that signed their adoption orders were interesting. Donavin must have liked his tiny new teddy bear because he happily gnawed on it before being distracted by Marilena and the heart-shaped key chains she held in her pudgy baby hand. Both really seemed to like making prosecutors and court staffers dodge tripping over their pint-size bodies in the hall and lobby.

But in the years to come, the most important part of the day will be crystal clear: They each gained a permanent happy home, complete with a mom, dad and siblings.

They are two of the 13 kids whose adoptions were finalized Tuesday during ceremony at the Midland County Courthouse marking the statewide adoption day. This is the fourth year Probate Judge Dorene S. Allen has presided over the happy occasion, and keeping with tradition she brought along a light up pen for each child, adding to the balloons, cookies, bears and books with family trees inside. This year, state Supreme Court Justice Clifford Taylor also attended, and said there will be more adoptions finalized in Michigan than in any other state.

Some of the kids were being adopted by their step parents and some were court wards gaining a forever home, but a foreign adoption was first on the list.

"We believe our family was put together by God," said Fred Sitter, before Marilena's adoption was finalized. She is the second child Sitter and his wife, Connie, have adopted; David, age 5, is from Mexico. Marilena is from Guatemala.

"This is what was meant to be," Fred said of how the family came to be.

Donavin came next, cooing his way through hearing his new legal name, as well as the names of his official parents, Paul and Patty Long.

He's lived with the Long family, who have adopted three other kids, since he was four days old. Patty answered the call asking if the family could take him, and said she agreed before she even asked her husband what he thought about it, calling to let him know, "We're gonna have a baby!"

"I think he was in shock," Patty said, laughing a bit while she watched her new son play with his energetic family and friends -- the Rice family -- in the lobby. She said an added bonus to having him so young is being able to have his hospital wristbands and baby photos, memories she doesn't have for her other kids.

Windy and David Rice also added to their family Tuesday, adopting Ronald and Sarah. The whole gang arrived wearing matching red sweatshirts with nicknames emblazoned across the front: Mom was Fried Rice, dad's read Steamed Rice, and the kids were Wild, Brown, O'Ronnie and Cake, providing a good laugh before clapping, hugs, kisses and rides home to the real celebrations of newly official forever families.

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